Michael Lewis

Fandom Analytics

Creating and Harnessing Consumer and Cultural Passion

 Springer

Business Guides on the Go

"Business Guides on the Go" presents cutting-edge insights from practice on particular topics within the fields of business, management, and finance. Written by practitioners and experts in a concise and accessible form the series provides professionals with a general understanding and a first practical approach to latest developments in business strategy, leadership, operations, HR management, innovation and technology management, marketing or digitalization. Students of business administration or management will also benefit from these practical guides for their future occupation/careers.

These Guides suit the needs of today's fast reader.

Michael Lewis

Fandom Analytics

Creating and Harnessing Consumer and Cultural Passion

Springer

Michael Lewis
Goizueta Business School
Emory University
Atlanta, GA, USA

If disposing of this product, please recycle the paper.

Mike combines a statistician's keen eye for the telling detail, a marketing scientist's knack for identifying key societal trends, and a lifelong sports fan's enduring love of the game. He's crafted that rarest of books—both entertaining and educational.

—Jay Busbee, Senior Writer, Yahoo Sports

Fandom Analytics is a game changer for anyone who wants to understand the intersection of art and science within sports and entertainment fandom. Mike helps make sense of the cultural phenomenon that is sports, offering an engaging exploration that we can all relate to.

—David Elgin, Senior Vice President, Analytics Atlanta Hawks
& State Farm Arena

The definitive guide for understanding fandom! Dr. Lewis distills decades of research into an actionable framework useful for brands inside and well beyond traditional sports—to create fandom, cultivate extreme loyalty, and dominate the marketplace.

—Todd Harris, CEO of Skillshot Media and Ghost Gaming

Mike's vast experience of fandom across multiple domains come together beautifully here to provide an insightful and compelling understanding of how we think as humans and how the business world can strategize around it. A fascinating read for the fandom newbie or experienced professional!

—Lucy Rushton, General Manager, Bay FC

Mike has created an insightful framework that reveals how fan culture shapes the marketing landscape and how marketing, in turn, reshapes the fan experience.

—Justin Watkins, Vice President, Strategy, Atlanta Braves

Preface

Welcome! The book you are now beginning (or considering) reading represents the culmination of the last two decades of my professional life. I've started to think of my career as a three-act play. This work is the apex of the second act.

I started my intellectual journey as a quantitative marketer with multiple degrees in optimization and statistics. I spent the first 15 years of my business school professor career working on topics like yield management, dynamic pricing, and consumer loyalty programs. My work on these topics often used dynamic optimization models of consumer behavior. The goal was always to optimize the value of some asset, whether it was a consumer relationship, inventory, or a brand. It was complicated mathematics applied to explain and improve decisions related to consumers. I think of this as my first act: a marketing scientist specializing in the dynamic analysis of customers and other marketing assets.

The best thing about academia is the freedom. Marketing analytics is a worthy field, and dynamic models of consumer behavior are important, but I started to get a little bored. It was time to start something new. I began to spend more time on an underappreciated part of marketing: how marketing impacts society and culture. Developing an algorithm for setting prices to maximize customer lifetime value or setting shipping fees to optimize customer spending is worthwhile. Still, this type of work is mainly interesting to firms trying to improve their bottom line.

To me, the part of marketing that really matters is where marketing touches culture and inspires passion. Consumer loyalty matters to brands, but the loyalty we see in the grocery store pales compared to the passion

we witness in people interested in sports, entertainment, politics, and other categories that make up our culture. I define fandom as the passion for some cultural entity. For my second act, I decided to apply my skills in customer analytics to topics in sports and culture (there has also been some work on politics, movies, and fashion). I think of this work as Fandom Analytics.

My second act has been an easy transition. Customer lifetime value models are not that different from models of player performance. Models of brand equity can be applied to baseball teams or soft drinks. I've worked on various topics ranging from on-field performance metrics to brand equity analysis for sports clubs. My second act involved combining my academic skills with my lifelong love of sports to develop a portfolio of work focused on sports and fandom analytics. It's been a passion project that has allowed me to stay interested and to keep learning.

A short book to an author can feel like a long book to a reader or student. When I think about the classes I've taken and the books I've read, things can usually be boiled down to a couple of paragraphs and maybe a key figure or two. It's just how we learn; we store a high-level summary of the material, and this map is there to bring us back to the source material when we need the details. What are the key takeaways from "Fandom Analytics"?

- The foundational argument of the book is that fandom is a critical part of human behavior that impacts both marketing results and the cultures we live in. The brands that create fans dominate the marketplace, and the cultural entities (sports, entertainment, politics, gaming, etc.) that inspire fandom define our societies.
- The Fandom Analytics Framework in Fig. 2.1 provides a tool for structured thinking about fandom creation and management. The framework provides the roadmap for the book and is the critical concept I want readers to gain from the book.
- Fandom Analytics requires an interdisciplinary approach that considers stories' roles in subcultures, fandom's psychological identity benefits, and the marketing concepts of brand and customer equity. The core of fandom analytics should be sports analytics techniques that identify great players and create outstanding teams.

- The chapters on "Fandom Beyond Sports" and "The Future of Fandom" are about generalizing the book's ideas to think beyond our main context of sports and beyond what fandom looks like at the moment. The book studies the critical concept of fandom in the realm of sports, but the material can be extended to all sorts of cultural products.

I've spent a lot of time thinking about and researching issues related to fandom. When it came time to put this thinking into a book, a bunch of decisions needed to be made to keep the presentation concise. I would like to mention three of these decisions.

The first decision was whether to ground the book in the single category of sports or to take a more general approach to the topic and discuss fandom across multiple categories. This was a real dilemma. A book about just sports feels a little limiting, but a book about all of fandom would probably require multiple volumes. I've attempted to split the difference and write about primarily sports fandom with selected material that extends the work to other categories.

Second, a challenge in writing a book about fandom is the balance between examples and theory. Examples are more powerful for most readers, but theory is more enduring. Given that the book is about fandom, I decided to err on the side of more examples and less academic theory. As the book is written in the second half of 2023 from my location at Emory University in Atlanta, the examples frequently feature names like Taylor Swift and Lionel Messi. As a side note, even coming up with examples is fairly challenging. There are very few shared cultural references these days, so I try to keep it to the big names.

The third predicament is the issue of technical content versus accessibility. Analytics can quickly become complex. But the goal is not to write a book on statistics, so I have kept equations and mathematics to a minimum. I have provided selected references for the more adventurous analyst. The goal is to provide the structure and perhaps motivation rather than a technical treatment. Given the breadth of the topic, a technical treatment would require a much more extensive and complicated book.

The folks offering the preceding comments about the book deserve a special shout-out. The folks include top marketing analytics executives at the Atlanta National Basketball Association (NBA) and Major League

Baseball (MLB) teams, an e-sports evangelist, a sportswriter who has written about National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR), and a woman who was the first female general manager in Major League Soccer (MLS). I've included these folks as they have been frequent sources of information and inspiration. These folks are passionate sports pros who work in very different functions, but at the core, they are all in the business of fandom. There is nothing better than when the professor learns something, and I'm grateful to know them.

Finally, I also want to mention a few folks from "within" the academy who contributed to the project. Doug Battle is my podcast producer and cohost. He is a great fan and provided my indirect source material. Jonathan Fineman and Jesse Bernstone were my teaching assistants and helped massively with figures. Last but certainly not least, Manish Tripathi, a former faculty at Emory, was an amazing partner during the early days of the sports analytics project.

Emory University   Michael Lewis
Atlanta, GA, USA

Contents

1

Fandom: The Business of Cultural Passion

1.1 The Power of Fandom

Fandom is one of the most potent forces in society. Sports, for instance, can animate and unify communities. What other force besides college football can regularly get more than 90,000 people to coordinate outfits and show up in small cities like University Park, Pennsylvania, or Athens, Georgia, during fall weekends? Whole countries can come together over sports. Five million people celebrated in Buenos Aires following Argentina's 2022 World Cup victory (Young, 2022). Beyond sports, Taylor Swift's Eras tour has captivated a significant portion of Millennial and Generation Z women and is estimated to have led to $5 billion in consumer spending (Kopstein & Espada, 2023). Like sports, Taylor Swift fans are passionate and unified, dressing in costumes inspired by their favorite albums, from classic country-style outfits for the *Fearless* era to neon and glitter for the *1989* era. What besides fandom can inspire towns, countries, and generations to come together in coordinated outfits to passionately cheer for a shared interest?

The notion that fandom drives sports and entertainment categories is not controversial, but fandom also influences diverse contexts, such as

political elections, educational choices, and product success. Fans are ultimately consumers of sports, entertainment, and other cultural products. While fandom is usually found in cultural categories like sports, movies, and music, any organization trying to persuade consumers or impact society can readily understand fandom's appeal. It is rare that consumer products achieve the status of having fans, but brands like Coke, Tesla, Lululemon, Apple, and a few others certainly inspire a degree of fandom. The critical differentiator between fans and ordinary consumers is that fans possess a passion, engagement, and devotion that ordinary consumers lack. The intense passion of fans means that fans are especially valuable customers. The passion of fans relative to ordinary consumers also suggests that fandom may have different foundations than ordinary brand loyalty.

This book is primarily about sports fandom. Sports fandom is an especially potent form of fandom that can last from early childhood through old age. Sports fandom also often has a community aspect, as teams and fandoms are often explicitly linked to locations. The linkage to a community is critical because it facilitates sports fandom to be a uniting force that unifies cities or nations. Sports fandom also transcends cultures. Americans love their NFL, Europeans and South Americans are fixated on soccer, and Indians are obsessed with cricket.

Sports fandom is not just about the love of sport; fandom is also embedded in personal and national identities. At the individual level, whether someone is a Dallas Cowboy or Manchester City fan is a frequent element in describing a person. At the societal level, baseball was known as America's national pastime; the All Blacks might be New Zealand's most recognized organization, and most of Europe and South America are obsessed with their national soccer teams. Sports fandom frequently becomes part of how people and societies build their identities and describe others.

The importance of fandom to people is illustrated by the desire of brands to attach themselves to sports. Major international tournaments like FIFA and the Olympics are sponsored by some of the most famous brands from around the globe. FIFA's 2022 sponsors included Coca-Cola, Adidas, Visa, and Hyundai, while the Tokyo Olympics sponsors included Coca-Cola, Toyota, Intel, and Samsung. Formula 1 racing cars

are covered by famous brands. For instance, the Red Bull 2023 car included Oracle, Honda, and Red Bull logos.

The economic power of fandom is obvious, as the monetization of fandom has helped create several multibillion-dollar sports leagues. For instance, the NFL generates $12 billion in annual revenue (Ozanian, 2023), while the EPL generates £5.5 billion (Buckingham, 2023). Any team, celebrity, politician, or brand knows the power of supporters becoming fanatics. Fans will pay premium prices, are fiercely loyal, and act as evangelists. The mystery is how to create, manage, and leverage fandom. At the heart of managing fandom is understanding fandom. Fandom is complicated because the emotions are more profound, and the role of community is more substantial than in ordinary consumption. Fandom is also a topic that reveals the limitations of traditional marketing and the importance of creating special or extraordinary products, services, and experiences.

The power of fandom also transcends commerce. Fans are quick to defend their favorite teams. The intensity and passion of fans can lead to blind devotion and violence. In European soccer, extreme fandom is at the core of hooliganism, which has led to on-field disruptions and violent clashes with opposing teams' fans (Reyass, 2017). Following one of the worst scandals in collegiate sports, a contingent of Penn State football rioted in support of the embattled football program and coach (Boylan, 2012). In settings as different as Donald Trump's MAGA rallies, the #FreeBritney movement, and the revolt of the Swifties against Ticketmaster, fans come together to protect the objects of their affection.

The book is intended as a resource for those interested in building and managing fandom in sports and other cultural categories. This is primarily accomplished through a Fandom Analytics Framework that provides a fandom management roadmap. The foundation for this fandom management roadmap involves a deep exploration of where fandom comes from, the value it provides people, and how it can be managed. When an organization's core customers are "Fans," traditional approaches to marketing will have substantial deficiencies. Fandom-driven organizations need broader thinking, interdisciplinary approaches, and different types of analytics to maximize the value of their customer bases. The goal is to provide definitions, frameworks, and perspectives that clarify the nature and challenges of managing fandom and guidance that can improve results.

1.2   Defining Fandom

Fandom is a trait that we all recognize but seldom think about precisely defining. We all know people who describe themselves as fans and can all recognize instances of fandom. However, we probably do not think about what separates a fan from a non-fan or when preference becomes so intense that it becomes fandom.

Academics in a variety of social science fields have attempted to define fandom, and several consistent themes emerge. First, fandom involves extreme preferences. According to Sandvoss (2005), fans are characterized by intense enthusiasm, passion, and dedication towards their chosen subject. Second, there is a community or social aspect to fandom. A fandom is a group of individuals who share a common interest in a specific subject or object such as a sports team, musician, or movie. Third, fandom involves engaging in fan-specific behaviors. Fans are known to engage in multiple activities to express and celebrate their fandom, such as attending conventions, creating fan art, writing fan fiction, or participating in online discussions (Hills, 2003). Generally, fandom can be described as a subculture that involves a strong sense of belonging and connection among its members (Bennett, 2001).

Several themes emerge across these perspectives. First, fandom is about intense positive attitudes towards some entity. Second, fandom includes a group component as a subculture evolves around the object of fandom. The intense positive emotions of fans drive individuals to engage in fan behaviors such as wearing clothes that reveal fandom and create fandom communities. Third, being a part of a fan group provides some utility to fans. Fandom involves monetary and time costs, so participating in fandom must also provide some benefits. Fourth, fandom is not domain-specific. Fan subcultures may be most common in sports, but fandom can occur in many categories.

For the purposes of this book, I define fandom in simple terms:

• Fandom is the expression of individual and shared passion, engagement with, and interest in some cultural entity.

My definition is intentionally broad. Fandom is something that we observe in many categories and to varying degrees. A more precise but limiting definition of fandom is less helpful as it may constrain what classifies as fandom. My definition includes three key elements that are relevant to fandom:

1. Fandom operates at the group and individual levels. Fandom requires a group or subculture to exist. Individuals (Fans) must gain some value from being a part of the group (The Fandom).
2. Fandom requires intense emotions that drive behavioral engagement.
3. Fandoms form around entities that are culturally relevant. Sports, entertainment, politicians, and even brands define the culture.

An expansive definition of fandom is also chosen because there is significant variation in terms of how fandom manifests across people and categories. In particular, fandom operates along a continuum as the levels of engagement may vary substantially across people who all classify themselves as fans. Additionally, the different structures of categories tend to change the character and expression of fandom across categories.

1.2.1   Fandom Continuum

Fandom is not an either-or phenomenon. Even within a stadium, there may be "die-hard" fans who show up with faces painted in the team colors and experience every win or loss as a personal victory or defeat, but there might also be casual fans who put on a team jersey and enjoy being part of the crowd for a few hours. Both forms of fandom are valid. Fandom may vary from intense to casual, and an individual's level of fandom may vary over time.

Recognizing that the degree of fan passion may vary across a fan community is relevant in several ways.

A fan community may include a variety of fan types ranging from the hardcore fan who knows the detailed history of the team and never misses a game to the peripheral fan who likes to attend when the team is vying for a championship or when friends are attending a match. The intense

fans may be the bedrock of the community, but fans with lesser interest may also make important contributions to the group. At the level of the individual, fandom may change over time. Individuals may begin as casual fans and evolve to become intense fans. Fandom involves a relationship between the team (or athlete) and the consumer. Based on the fan's evolving knowledge and interests, this relationship may change over time. An individual may evolve from a casual fan to an expert fan whose fandom is critical to their self-concept. The organization needs to consider segment differences when creating marketing plans and content.

From the team or cultural entity that is the object of fandom, the notion of a fandom continuum is also critical in terms of the possible degree of passion that can be created. A sports team in an established and popular league can generate intense fandom—face painting, shared songs, or collecting behaviors. In contrast, a new team in a less established or popular league may struggle with generating fandom and may need to pursue awareness or build interest. An NFL football team with 75 years of history has very different fandom possibilities compared to a new lacrosse team in a brand-new league.

1.2.2   Category Differences

As I have mentioned, our focus in this book is primarily on sports fandom. Sports fandom is, in many ways, the gold standard for fandom, but fandom exists across a range of categories. Figure 1.1 highlights several categories that play important roles in culture and inspire fandom: sports, entertainment, arts, games, cultural institutions, products, and politics. Thinking about fandom in different categories may provide value as it highlights different forms of fandom and reveals what is possible. A movie franchise or automaker may gain insights by comparing their fandoms to what exists in sports. Fandom has universal aspects that are shared across categories but also idiosyncratic elements that vary across categories. The idiosyncratic differences may be due to the nature of given products and each category's role in society. Fandom is about passion for the things that make up a culture, so a category's history and traditions matter. A category like sports might have a tradition of public spectacle like wearing
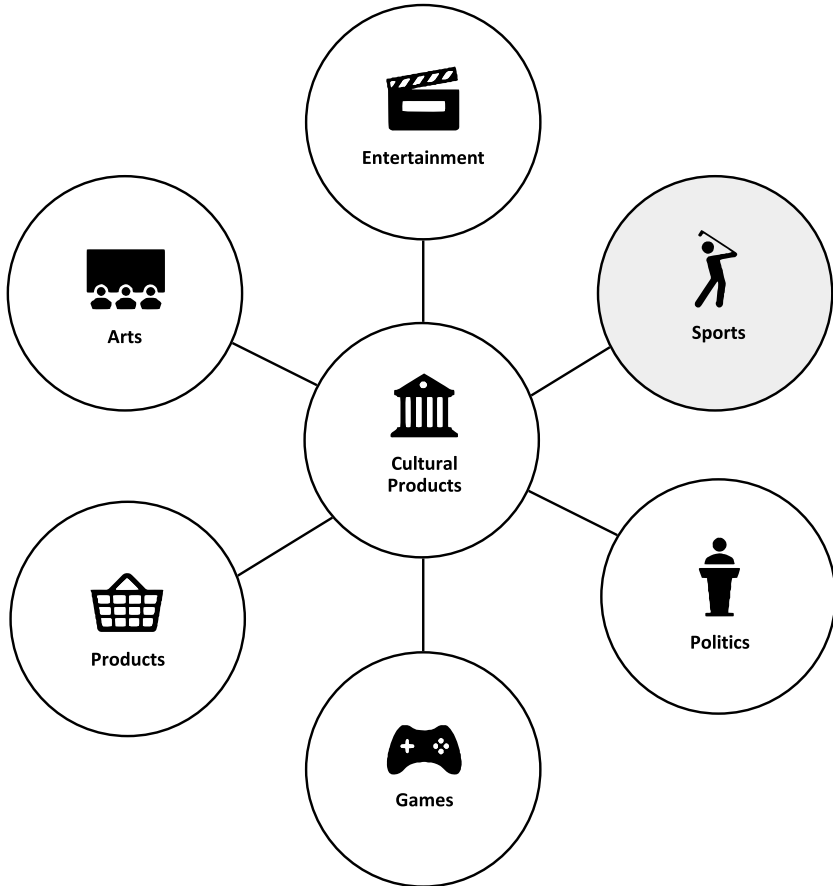
Fig. 1.1 Fandom categories

team jerseys and verbal chants, while the norms of classical music performances would lead its fans to dress in formal attire and restrained applause.

One fandom dimension that often varies across categories is the length of the fandom life-cycle. For example, sports fandom has traditionally been an almost lifelong trait. Being a lifelong sports fan is more than just supporting a team or athlete. It is a way of life that brings people together, creates memories, and provides a sense of belonging. For many, it is a

family tradition passed down from generation to generation. In contrast, entertainment fandom is often fleeting. For example, the music industry has a long history of One-Hit Wonders or artists who have a single mass-market hit, such as "Mickey" by Toni Basil and "Come on Eileen" by Dexys Midnight Runners. Fandom for these artists tends to be brief rather than enduring. There are counterexamples of musical artists with multi-decade careers, like Elton John and Cher, who have maintained fan bases for 50-plus years. Nevertheless, even this type of enduring fandom is different in character from what occurs in sports. Fandom for a musical artist is centered on a person who ages, and because musical tastes constantly change, the artist's fanbase often ages with the artist. In contrast, sports teams and leagues are constantly renewing fanbases and may be viewed as institutions.

Fandom also varies across categories in terms of fans' willingness to publicly express or demonstrate fandom. The "clothing test" is a quick way to categorize fandom. The idea of the clothing test is to consider how willing and eager people are to wear a brand's logo. Sports fandom may be the ultimate example of success on the clothing test. At almost any arena across the globe, you can find fans wearing team colors and often team-branded clothing. The clothing test illuminates category fandom differences. Musicians frequently sell concert t-shirts, while probably only the most rabid political supporters are willing to wear a shirt that features a political candidate. The critical insight is that the level and character of fandom that can be built differs across categories, so the strategies and metrics used should also be adapted.

1.3   Examples

The book will use numerous examples of fandom and fan behaviors to illuminate concepts. However, a challenge in discussing fandom is that full appreciation of any instance of fandom requires a shared cultural background. We began the chapter with quick examples from American collegiate football, Argentinian soccer, and Taylor Swift. These are all powerful and popular fandoms, but they are not universal. College football is enormously popular but is strictly a US sport. The Argentinian

World Cup championship team and Lionel Messi are a global phenomenon, but soccer lags other sports in the United States. Taylor Swift is a global force in music, but her popularity varies across generations. It is hard for SEC football fans to appreciate Argentinian's love for their national soccer team and hard for Argentinians to grasp the importance of the annual Iron Bowl game featuring Alabama and Auburn.

A book about fandom needs examples. Fan behavior and emotions are fascinating and relatable, but examples do not mean much unless the reader has enough familiarity to appreciate the intensity and details of a fandom. Our examples in the book will try to focus on exceptionally well-known instances of fandom. Two of our recurring examples will be Michael Jordan and Formula 1. These are both global fandoms and the subjects of recent documentary programming: *The Last Dance* on ESPN (Hehir, 2020) and *Drive to Survive* on Netflix (Gay-Rees & Martin, 2019-present).

1.3.1   Michael Jordan

Michael Jordan is a global superstar with numerous basketball accolades. Jordan's basketball exploits, such as multiple NBA championships and the Olympic Dream Team, have created an almost legendary aura around him. Michael Jordan is a great source material for a book on fandom because his exploits are familiar, and his career has created many illustrative examples of the power and intricacies of fandom. Jordan's career has included being the primary ingredient in building basketball fandoms in Chicago and North Carolina through on-court excellence, being associated with an Olympic team that redefined international sports, transcending sports to become a movie star, and even in retirement being such an iconic figure that a show about his final NBA championship became ESPN's most viewed documentary (Thorne, 2020). Jordan's athletic accomplishments and resulting fandom show the powerful link between excellence and sports fandom.

In addition, Jordan's popularity is so extensive that he has also become one of the most important figures in sports marketing. Foremost among Jordan's marketing successes is the Air Jordan brand. The Air Jordan

brand has become a household name in the world of sneakers. In 1984, Michael Jordan signed a deal with Nike to create his own line of shoes. The first Air Jordan shoe, the Air Jordan 1, was released in 1985, and it had an immediate impact. The shoe included a bold design and use of the now-iconic "Jumpman" logo. The shoe was also banned by the NBA because it did not meet the league's strict uniform regulations, which only added to its mystique and appeal. Despite the ban, the Air Jordan 1 quickly became a hit among basketball players and sneakerheads alike. The Air Jordan line has exhibited staying power as the brand continues to release new models and special editions into the 2020s. Air Jordan's cultural impact is so significant that the story of the Air Jordan became the source material for a Hollywood movie *Air*, (Affleck, 2023).

The Air Jordan story is significant as it illustrates the power of marketing within fandom. The success of the Air Jordan is driven by its association with Michael Jordan. Jordan's spectacular skills are associated with the shoe, making the shoe more desirable. However, the associations and marketing benefits go both ways. As the Air Jordan line became a favorite of collectors and sneaker aficionados, the brand acquired its own unique following. To younger audiences, their introduction to Michael Jordan may be through exposure to the Air Jordan line. The success of the shoe and the resulting Air Jordan fandom has added additional layers to the story of Michael Jordan.

1.3.2 Formula 1

Formula 1 is a global "open wheel" racing organization with a rich history and a modern approach to creating fan loyalty. The foundation of Formula 1 popularity is the combination of cutting-edge technology, iconic circuits, and superstar drivers. Formula 1 is known for gripping racing powered by advanced technologies that result in racing involving extreme G-forces and top speeds exceeding 200 mph. Formula 1 also features iconic circuits across the globe. Monaco is known for its tight corners, narrow streets, and glamorous setting. The Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps in Belgium is a classic track, with its fast corners and unpredictable weather making it a challenge for drivers. Silverstone in the

United Kingdom is also highly regarded, with its high-speed corners and history dating back to the first-ever F1 race in 1950. The uniqueness and challenges of each track inspire fandom for individual races.

Formula 1 also has fascinating human faces that inspire and attract fans. From the past, drivers like Ayrton Senna and Michael Schumacher remain etched in the minds of fans as legends of the sport. Senna won three world championships before his tragic death in 1994, while Schumacher held the record for the most world championships with seven titles until Lewis Hamilton tied the mark in 2020. Since 2010, Hamilton and Max Verstappen have dominated the sport and become international celebrities. The combination of amazing technology, iconic locations, and global stars is a potent mix for building fandom.

Another driving force behind Formula 1's popularity is the level of sponsorship that the sport receives. Major corporations worldwide invest heavily in the sport, providing the necessary funding to keep the races and teams running. This has enabled Formula 1 to attract some of the best drivers and teams in the world, making it one of the most competitive and exciting racing sports on the planet. Perhaps, Formula 1's most important marketing partnership is with the streaming platform, Netflix. The Netflix series *Drive to Survive* (Gay-Rees & Martin, 2019-present) offers an inside look at the sport, showcasing the drama, rivalries, and behind-the-scenes action that takes place both on and off the track. The show has helped to bring new fans into the sport, providing a glimpse into the world of Formula 1 that was previously inaccessible to many. *Drive to Survive* has also profiled disputes between drivers, team principles, and the legal troubles of a team owner (Trivedi, 2022). These conflicts add drama to the racing action.

Formula 1 fandom is a unique and exciting community that offers a sense of camaraderie, expertise, and thrilling experiences. Formula 1 also highlights the roles of marketing and the power of sports stories. Formula 1 teams have a symbiotic relationship with sponsors by providing platforms for non-sports brands in exchange for investments that fund technological innovations and racing success. Formula 1 and *Drive to Survive* also showcase the power of sports stories in building fandom.

1.4   Monetizing Fandom

The preceding definitions and examples reveal the importance of fandom in modern culture. Fandom can provide structures and communities that allow people to interact and connect. Sports fandoms have a natural structure, with fans building networks or subcultures around teams, players, and leagues. Historically, sports fandoms arose around the local club. However, in the modern era, fandom does not just happen. Even if fandom comes from the grassroots and develops organically, the value of fandom is quickly recognized and monetized. Fandom is big business.

The examples of fandom reveal something important about modern fandom. The teams or cultural entities that attract fan communities are often actively managed and marketed as brands. The fans that comprise these fandom communities are often high-value customers. Nike's Air Jordan and Red Bull are consumer brands that are promoted and positioned to appeal to consumers using sports. The fandom that is created around these brands is a valuable economic asset.

The genesis of the success of Air Jordan shoes was largely driven by fans' passion for and associations with Michael Jordan. Jordan himself can also be considered a brand cultivated over decades. The foundation for the Jordan brand is Jordan's exceptional talent, but the Jordan brand has also been built through his history of winning, partnerships with brands, crossovers into film, and compelling personality. Even two decades after retiring, the Jordan brand drives sneaker sales and is the fodder for popular content like *The Last Dance* docuseries and the feature film *Air*.

The ability of Nike and Hollywood to monetize the Jordan brand highlights the role of fandom in modern marketing. Fan passion is something that firms and individuals can leverage to create profitable opportunities. Modern fandom is not the organic or naturally occurring passion that builds around shared cultural entities. In past eras, passion for a national, collegiate, or hometown club likely evolved almost organically, with the local or national community coming together to support their team. The key point is that in the past, community belonging often preceded or was the basis for a team's following. Games were covered in the